

The Social Questions Bulletin

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THE METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE

An organization which seeks to abolish the profit system in order to develop a classless society based upon the obligation of mutual service.

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THE RED-BAITERS AND THE METHODISTS

The Red-baiters have recently been laying down a heavy barrage against "the Methodist Reds."

THE ATTACK FROM WITHOUT

The Hearst Press. Last summer William Randolph Hearst syndicated a series of articles by Rev. George Donald Pierce, a Protestant Episcopal preacher, to the effect that the "Reds" were using the clergy in a drive to destroy the institutions of the United States. He followed these by another series, "Rid the M. E. Church of 'Red' Incubus." For this drive he used Ralph M. Easley, of the National Civic Federation. Easley has for many years been attacking the social movement in the churches, especially in the Methodist Church (along with collective bargaining, minimum wage laws, old age pensions, social security legislation, etc.). Now his eye is on General Conference. He hopes that that body "will deal with the McConnell-Ward-Chappell radical aggregation without gloves."

In the "Philadelphia Inquirer." The columnist, Samuel Crowther, quotes our statement on social-economic planning (see March Bulletin), including the sentence, "Many more people can have much more actual property than they have now." Then he comments that the program involves the breakup of the family and the taking away of all private property. He ends up with the statement that it is impossible to be a Methodist and also a Communist, and asks, Why then does the Methodist Church allow itself to be exploited?

Police Chief Davis. The president of the District Newspaper Association, Los Angeles, at the suggestion of Police Chief Davis has sent to the community newspapers an editorial on "Communism in Churches," especially attacking the Methodist Church because of what the Southern California Conference said about the profit system. Also Chief Davis was reported on good authority to have told the Merchants and Manufacturers Association to withdraw their support from the Methodist Church, because it had been captured by the Communist Party. The Los Angeles Methodist preachers appointed a committee which interviewed the Police Chief and Mayor Shaw. Davis disavowed the statement. Nevertheless, the committee made a report which Bishop Baker sent to every preacher in the conference with a letter asking that it be read to their congregations. The report declared "that the Methodist Church in keeping with the traditions of the Church universal did not propose to take its message from the President of the United-States, the Governor of the State, the Mayor of the city, or the Chief of Police, but from God."

Coal and Lumber Associations. An Inter-Denominational Laymen's Council has been formed by seven retail coal and lumbermen associations. Its first job is to try to get support for its views on consumers' cooperation from Methodist General Conference delegates. These views, according to a spokesman, A. T. Murphy, editor and publisher of *The Black Diamond*, Chicago, are: Any group of consumers has a right to create a cooperative society, though cooperatives are bad economy and stepping stones toward a new form of government. But statements such as those made by the Federal Council of Churches Seminar that cooperatives are a means of achieving "the Kingdom of God on earth"; and constant church propaganda for cooperatives are another matter. Religion must be separated from economic concerns.

A Voice from the South. Rembert Gilman Smith, of the Methodist Church South,

joins the secular voices and outdoes them. From his pamphlet "Methodist Reds": "So fearful are they (these 'Red' leaders) that organized religion may today be an opiate, that they may make it a stimulant to slaughter. 'On to the barricades' they seem to shout." "Ought not the name to be changed from Methodist Federation for Social Service to Marxist Federation for Social Strife?"

THE ATTACK FROM WITHIN

Here and there groups of Methodist laymen are taking a hand in heading off "radicalism" in their church.

The Conference of Methodist Laymen. On July 29th, 35 Methodist laymen from several central states met at the Union League Club, Chicago, and organized the Conference of Methodist Laymen—"for renewed emphasis on the spiritual phase of the life and work of the church." Its chairman is Henry S. Henschen. He was president of the Chicago Bank of Commerce which closed June 24, 1932. The secretary is Wilbur Helm, also a Chicago banker and president of the Illinois Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.

Its Position. The Conference has issued two pronouncements, two pamphlets and an address by one of its members; also a statement to the Methodist press which summarizes "the essential points" in the principles adopted. These are: The building of Christian character is the fundamental object of our church. Its message is personal, individual. For its influence on social and economic conditions true Christianity relies upon the work of Christian individuals. There is essential and inevitable conflict between the personal philosophy of Christianity and the philosophy of economic determinism, which relates all human happiness to economic reward. Therefore when pulpit and religious press substitute economic and social systems for the Christian ideal of individual responsibility and freedom of choice they are losing sight of their fundamental objectives. Methodist ministers and laymen are called to join in the study of the problems growing out of the conflict between these opposing philosophies.

What It Means. Here is first a purely personal religion—as though the social meaning and imperative of the Christian religion had never been realized or taught. Next is the assumption that any view of life which goes beyond this is based on "economic determinism." Thus the exponents of a religion to be worked out in the organized as well as the personal aspect of life are classed with the advocates of materialism. This magician's trick is completed by declaring that economic and social systems are "mechanistic in character, impersonal in operation"; by asserting that the ills of the world will not be cured by "more materialism"; and by charging that "certain minorities in Protestant organizations . . . would substitute the external compulsion of artificial and materialistic systems for the motivation from within. . . ." The facts, of course, are exactly opposite to this strange mixture of ideas. It is these "minorities" who challenge the present social order who are waging a spiritual warfare, theoretically and practically, with economic determinism and materialism. Their judgment upon our present economic method rests upon its dependence upon selfishness and greed, upon its impersonal and mechanistic nature. They seek a more spiritual way of life for organized mankind as well as for the individual.

Further Meaning. This these Methodist laymen cannot see because their underlying purpose is the defense of the present order. The first meeting assembled "for the purpose of discussing 'the growing radical propaganda and hostile attitude toward business and the established order which are being disseminated and proclaimed in the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church.' . . ." One of their pamphlets proclaims that "the economic system has done an amazingly creditable job of maintaining employment . . ."; that the profit motive "is the mainspring of economic progress. . . ." The author sees "not the slightest proof that the economic system has failed in its essential service to society."

An Offensive! This defense of the existing order becomes an offensive in press statements of the officers of the Conference: "We are going to demand settlement of the status of the Communist-influenced Methodist Federation for Social Service, and of clergymen and church officials who use their positions to preach Socialism and Communism. . . . The campaign is being planned with thoroughness. . . ." "Educational policies of the church together with its institutions, such as schools, colleges, charities and missions, may fall within the range of the movement's careful scrutiny." "Many laymen, we believe, are of the opinion that pastors and editors should speak only as citizens until the church is ready to pronounce. . . ." From these and other similar statements quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* and the Hearst press it becomes clear what "renewed emphasis upon the spiritual phase of the life and work of the church" means in fact. It means control over and limitation of the utterances of preachers, editors, educators, board executives and voluntary groups. The specific and immediate objectives are the Board of Education and the M. F. S. S.

California Laymen. In the Southern California Conference a Methodist Laymen's Committee, with 100 names on its letterhead, has set itself the job of getting the Gen-

eral Conference to "take definite action to correct the existing situation by adopting such measures as will eradicate those sinister influences that have insinuated themselves into the church . . ." with special reference to the Methodist agencies that have to do with the training of youth.

A Memorial. It has prepared a General Conference Memorial to the effect that the General Conference statements on the economic order have been followed by annual conferences and have encouraged preachers to over-emphasize the social gospel at the expense of its "personal and more spiritual aspects," thus creating the impression that Methodism is not loyal to American institutions; that some of those responsible for the education of the church youth are misleading them on this matter. It petitions the Conference to correct this situation, especially by "removing from office" such leadership and to provide that youth be "grounded in the fundamentals" in such a way as to be fortified against "insidious propaganda." It reminds the General Conference, "We lay members have held or are now holding important offices in the church and through the years have supported it with our services and our means. . . ."

A TIE-UP?

Part of One Piece? The Easley-Hearst articles rejoice that "lay groups of patriotic Methodists" are showing themselves "outraged by the impudent proposals of Ward, McConnell, *et al.*" * * * R. G. Smith says he has had requests for his pamphlet *Methodist Reds* "from Maine to California, from bishops, ministers and laymen of both Methodisms . . . from the American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and from other patriotic organizations." His pamphlet closes by quoting Article of Religion XXIV, "the riches and goods of Christians are not common. . . ." This is also quoted at the beginning of the opening statement of the Conference of Methodist Laymen. (So much of Methodist unity is already achieved.) * * * The California Laymen's General Conference Memorial contains the phrase "the enemy within our gates," which is the name of a department on "subversive activities" in the monthly *National Republic*, semi-official organ of a coalition of 117 "patriotic" groups.

Henschen-Easley-Hearst. A few days before the Union League meeting of July 29th, Mr. Henschen sent an announcement of it to Mr. Easley. On July 30th Mr. Easley wrote to Harper Sibley of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He said in part: "I am sending you a copy of my attack on Communism in the Methodist Church, together with the first instalment which started in the Hearst papers today. . . . Isn't it disgusting that this pair of Red fakers, Ward and McConnell, can put over what they have been doing for so long. Another enclosure is a copy of an announcement of a meeting held yesterday in Chicago by important laymen in six states, with whom I am in touch."

Liberty League Viewpoint. In a statement in the *Christian Advocate* of September 5th Carl F. Keck of Milwaukee, a member of the Executive Committee of the Conference of Methodist Laymen, says that there was distributed at the Chicago conference an address printed by the American Liberty League, "The Duty of the Church to the Social Order." He quotes from it, "to indicate the spirit of our assembled laymen." The address was first delivered before the Michigan Association of Congregational Churches in May, 1935, by S. Wells Utley, president of the Detroit Steel Casting Company and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the First Congregational Church, Detroit. This is one of a large and constantly growing number of "documents" which is being distributed free by the American Liberty League, creature of great utility, munitions, steel, copper and other interests with assets of billions of dollars. Last fall Mr. Utley was the spokesman through whom the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, the Liberty League and the National Manufacturers Association announced that if they could not get what they wanted from either political party, they would go out for a businessman's president.

Magill and the Utility Interests. One of the signers of the Laymen's statement was Hugh S. Magill, president of the American Federation of Utility Investors. For a time he was also secretary of the International Council of Religious Education, but so many and vigorous were the protests from the liberal church world to his holding this dual position that he was forced to make a choice. He chose utilities. The Federal Trade Commission uncovered for all to see the Red-baiting activities of the utilities. One spokesman said, "I would not try logical reasons, but I would try to pin the Bolshevik idea on my opponent."

Interlocking Reactionary Groups. These groups that use and are used by the reactionary Methodist brethren are part of an interlocking group of "patriotic" organizations. The Senate Lobby Committee has shown that in general they are all supported by the same group of financiers. They distribute tons of printed propaganda; devise intricate "charts," "blacklists," lists of "doubtful speakers," "red networks"; carry on a continuous attack against the Federal Council of Churches, liberal and left wing church groups, pacifist and radical organizations. They lump together indiscriminately Communists, Socialists, pacifists, Christian pacifists, liberals, even the New Deal administration. *Are these to tell us what religion is and what the pulpit shall not say?*

In Personal Terms. These organizations and their locals do not stop with counsel and denunciation. They continually snipe at individuals whose voices are raised against the profit system or against war, or in behalf of social justice in concrete cases. Methodist leaders come in for their share of this sniping. A few illustrations from many: The U. S. Chamber of Commerce ordered its research assistant to write an article on "Communism's Threat to Academic Freedom," which was aimed especially at President G. Bromley Oxnam of DePauw. (The research man resigned rather than write the article.) Dr. E. F. Tittle has for years been under attack by the "patriots" because of his stand against war. When a young Chicago Methodist preacher went with others to the Police Commissioner to get permission for an unemployed demonstration, the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation sent a letter implying that he was a Communist to the preacher's community newspaper, the Chief of Police, neighboring preachers, the district superintendent and bishop and the local Legion post.

In the Name of Christianity—and Profits? Harry A. Jung of the Vigilant Federation instructs his cohorts to work "for God (against anti-God)—for home (against nationalization of man, woman and child)—for country (Americanization, not internationalism)." Elizabeth Dilling, author of "The Red Network," has issued a folder entitled "Are Certain Christian Leaders Still Christian?" The Methodist laymen want more preaching of personal religion. Occasionally another note is heard. The California laymen say that the questions raised by the Southern California preachers have far-reaching import "to us as laymen whose businesses and very livelihood are threatened by the program which the conference seems to favor."

THE REAL LINEUP

The lineup is not, as some sections of the church press have indicated, laymen vs. preachers.

Laymen vs. Laymen. Many laymen are questioning the present social order. Some of them are organizing to say so. A Laymen's Religious Movement (Methodist Episcopal, unofficial, not affiliated with any other group), was started in Chicago in January. H. C. Snyder, of Madison, Wis., is chairman, and John C. Lazenby of Milwaukee is secretary. Over 200 laymen from 30 states have endorsed the Movement. Quotations from a press statement show its position: "... in every age religion has been quickened and revived by active participation in the great group social movements which have arisen from the ever-changing conditions of human living." Then faithfulness to religious ideas "makes it impossible to be silent regarding the 'unchristian, unethical and anti-social' aspects of present-day civilization which everyone recognizes." "The present leadership of the Methodist Church is standing true to the spirit of the Gospel. . . ." "The summons, therefore, is for our laymen to establish the way of Christ in the changing social order of our generation." This group thinks that there is "a large and somewhat inarticulate group of laity which believes in the indivisibility of the personal and social gospel."

Preachers vs. Preachers. There is a lineup also among preachers. It showed itself in the east when Bishop Leonard instructed the Pittsburgh social service commission last fall not to sponsor the M. F. S. S. conference held in that city, and issued an open letter directed against the M. F. S. S. and its secretaries. And this spring when he and district superintendents wrote Erie Conference preachers discouraging attendance at a meeting at Meadville called by Federation members. It showed itself in the west when Adna Leonard, of the Southern California Conference, sent out a letter warning against a "political machine" which he said certain preachers—whom he named—"known for their extreme ideas on social and economic theories" were setting up to get themselves elected to General Conference. (Bishop Herbert Welch, one of the organizers of the M. F. S. S., now looks upon it "with some concern." He notes "current reports" that the executives have "denounced the profit motive as utterly unchristian, renounced the capitalist system . . . proposed the complete overturning of the present order. . . .")

The Issue. Within the church the issue then is between those, both preachers and laymen, who want a purely personal "regeneration of the heart" gospel, leaving economic and social matters alone, and those who seek the Christian way of life in organized society as well as in personal behavior. This is also the division between those who find that the Christian way of life and the needs of humanity now require the transforming of the present economic order and those whose interests are best served by its continuance in its present form and who therefore want religion to keep its hands off.

How did the prophets and Jesus, the apostles, the Church Fathers, John Wesley, hear the voice of God and find the course of a regenerating religion? By listening to the needs of the poor or to the desires of the powerful?

Sources: Besides those quoted in text, the current church press; *Advertising Age* (on Coal and Lumbermen); material collected by Clarence Athearn, W. B. Waltmire, Gross Alexander, A. A. Heist.

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